

Penobscot Indian Nation

Location and Land status:

The Penobscot Nation is a federally recognized Indian tribe in Maine (population 2,129). Their traditional homeland is the 5,849,600 acre Penobscot River watershed. Today, the Penobscot Nation's land holdings consist of more than 148,525 acres in numerous parcels throughout the state that include Reservation and Trust Land. Of the acreage, 4,841 acres extend across 146 islands on the Penobscot River. All the land in the Penobscot River Valley once belonged to the Penobscot people, from the Canadian border to the coast. The majority of the land is covered with timber of high quality. The people depended on the land for hunting and trade. As settlers came into the territory, the Tribal holdings were reduced. Later, the lumber industry took hold and more land was used for industrial needs, even the river itself. The Penobscot people became crafts oriented, making canoes, snowshoes, moccasins, while the natural resources such as moose, beaver and caribou were dying out, threatening the loss of the tribal sustenance way of life.

Tribal Government:

The Penobscot have a council composed of twelve elected members, lead by a chief and vice chief.

Department of Natural Resources

Summary of Environmental Accomplishments in 2001-2002

Compliance/Enforcement

- Four Water Resources Program Staff have been working on obtaining EPA Inspector credentials; training included "24 hour Basic Health and Safety" and "Basic Inspection Techniques".
- WRP staff discovered, investigated, and reported to Maine DEP, Maine LURC or EPA numerous violations of environmental regulations affecting the Penobscot Reservation. One incident involved several thousand gallons of gasoline that leaked from a gas station into groundwater and Penobscot River.
- PIN continues to review compliance of wastewater discharge licenses affecting Penobscot Nation reservation resources. Staff submitted comments on a proposed modification to a Maine Wastewater Discharge License for Lincoln Pulp and Paper.
- PIN participated in a stakeholder rulemaking process with ME DEP for developing new toxic rules for wastewater discharges.

Water Quality Monitoring/Assessment

- Presumably due to high temperatures and drought the worst algae blooms we ever experienced occurred in summer 2001. We conducted monitoring to quantify the occurrence and severity of these blooms. In late August – early September algae blooms were severe enough to cause fish kills in certain areas of the West Branch Penobscot River. Chlorophyll a readings reached as high as 670 ppm and total phosphorous as high as 870 ppm.
- In 2001 PIN assisted Maine DEP with two comprehensive waste load allocation studies for the Penobscot River watershed and the Piscataquis River watershed. The tribe provided most of the staffing and equipment for the projects. Data from these studies will be used to establish permit limits for discharges within the watersheds.
- PIN assisted EPA with a sediment oxygen demand (SOD) study of the Penobscot River. Results from this study will be incorporated into the Penobscot River model.
- Collaborated with Biodiversity Research Institute to sample loon chicks from Round Mountain Pond and otters from Birch Stream for mercury. The loon results indicated that mercury levels from Round Mountain Pond do not pose a health risk to breeding loons.
- We continued monitoring ambient water quality at more than 85 sites within the Penobscot River watershed. These data are used to determine attainment of water quality
- standards and to detect trends. The data are shared with ME DEP for 305(b) reporting per our cooperative water quality monitoring agreement.
- PIN continues to monitor Trust Land lakes and to compile water quality data to characterize water quality conditions. We are calculating trophic status indices to determine trophic trends.
- Cooperate with University of Maine Water Resources Institute with water quality sampling at East

- Branch Lake for EPA Acid Rain Monitoring Program
- Monitored aquatic benthic macroinvertebrates from 5 locations within the Penobscot and Piscataquis watersheds for use in determining whether aquatic life criteria are being met. These data will be shared with ME DEP for 305(b) reporting and for reclassification purposes.
- PIN continues to assist MEDEP with collections and technical assistance for the Dioxin Monitoring Program and the Surface Water Ambient Toxics Monitoring Program. We continue to participate on the Technical Advisory Committee for these programs and review relevant data as it becomes available to determine risk to tribal members and tribal resources.
- In 2001 PIN began using a new water quality database, which was developed by USGS for PIN, to store and manage water quality related data. Given the vast amount of data collected by PIN, this database is a great improvement from spreadsheet-type data management used in the past.
- PIN began an aquatic invasive plants program including education and enforcement of Maine's new law. We have begun posting signs at all boat access points and have received training for doing courtesy inspections. PIN hosted an educational workshop for all Maine tribes.

Nonpoint Source Pollution Management

- Stabilized and revegetated approximately 150 feet of badly eroded stream bank along Alder Stream.
- Removed an abutment from a failed bridge on Alder Stream and reshaped and stabilized the stream bank to prevent continued erosion.
- Replaced a failed, rotted wood culvert on a tributary of Little Alder Stream which was causing continued washouts of road material into the stream. Also ditched and shaped the road leading to the culvert to properly channel water and prevent erosion.
- Laid out an alternate ATV trail system leading to Snow Mountain to reroute access away from high-risk erosion areas and keep ATVs out of the streams. ATV bridges, stream bank stabilization, and water bars will be completed this summer.
- Multimedia grants received by the Penobscot marked the beginning of the Tribal/EPA partnership. Performance Partnership Grants have encompassed the development of the extremely successful beaver management tool, known as the "Beaver Deceiver". The Nation overcame the daunting technical challenge of preventing beaver damming and resultant water problems and property damage by creating a wooden-frame fence that prevented culverts from being plugged. At the same time, the fencing allows the necessary water to flow virtually unimpeded, helping to maintain a wealth of high-quality wetlands.

Model Tribal Regional Air Program

- Installed an PM Improve monitor- collocated with State PM find monitor and collaborate with the State in collecting data. Data will be inputted into the National data base.
- Installed an acid rain monitor and will incorporate data into the national data base.
- Review permits of off-reservation emissions that potentially impact tribal resources.
- Continue to assess indoor air quality.
- Work with EPA contractor to conduct emissions inventory
- Attend national, regional and local air quality meetings

Fact Sheet (May 2002)